

a common stand against those forces. We must see to it that the beginnings of cooperation we have seen with India, the world's largest democracy, will move forward to protect the lives of our people and build a more secure future for both of our great nations.

IN HONOR OF GRACE F. SINAGRA

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 6, 2000

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, today I honor the memory of Mrs. Grace F. Sinagra, a longtime resident of Lakewood, OH who passed away on November 22, 2000 at the age of 87.

This remarkable woman owned and operated Sinagra's Food Market in Lakewood for 51 years along with her husband of 60 years, Nate Sinagra, who passed away in 1990. The couple was known locally for their tremendous generosity and concern for their fellow citizens. During the Great Depression, the Sinagras frequently extended credit to those in need, so that they could afford to feed their families. However the end of the depression did not mark the end of the Sinagra's charity. The two continued to donate food on a weekly basis to the Sisters of the Poor Clares.

For Grace Sinagra, this altruism began at a very early age. In 1916, when she was only 3 years old, Sinagra left the comfort of home in Alexandria, Virginia and traveled with her family to Sicily to bring her grandmother to the United States. However, due to the outbreak of World War I, the family was forced to delay their return until 1919. This experience must have made a significant impression on her, for she continued this type of heroism and selflessness for the rest of her life.

Mrs. Sinagra is survived by her son Anthony Sinagra of Lakewood, OH, her daughters Theresann Santoro of Lyndhurst, OH and Sister Annette of Adrian, MI; eight grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; and one brother.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my fellow colleagues in the House of Representatives to join me today in remembering Grace F. Sinagra. The memory of this great woman will surely endure in the hearts of all those whom she touched.

TRIBUTE IN MEMORY OF FORMER
CONGRESSMAN HENRY B. GONZALEZ

SPEECH OF

HON. WILLIAM (BILL) CLAY

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 5, 2000

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I was deeply saddened to learn of the recent passing of former Representative Henry B. Gonzalez. He was a good friend and a respected colleague during the course of our service together in the House of Representatives. I wish to extend my sympathies to his wife, Bertha, and their children. I wish them well as they continue life without their beloved "Henry B."

Henry Gonzalez's long career in public service was a distinguished one. He was the first Hispanic to be elected to the San Antonio City Council. He was the first Hispanic elected to

the Texas State Senate. He was the first Hispanic elected to represent Texas in the U.S. Congress. He tirelessly and passionately represented his constituents for more than half a century. He became particularly well known as a champion of the poor and the downtrodden.

The high point of Henry Gonzalez's 37 years as a member of this body was when he became chairman of the Banking Committee, a post he held for three terms. As chairman, he played a key role in resolving the savings-and-loan scandals of the 1980s. He also made his mark advocating for the expansion of affordable housing opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, as I bring to a close my own career in the House, I frequently reflect on the issues, the legislation, and the people that engaged me here the most. Henry Gonzalez ranks high. I will miss him a great deal.

RECOGNITION OF BEN VINSON III

HON. JOHN P. MURTHA

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 6, 2000

Mr. MURTHA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recommend to my colleagues a fascinating article written by Ben Vinson III, entitled, "Blacks in Mexico," published in *El Aguila Del Hudson Valley*. Ben Vinson, a native of Johnstown, PA, is an Assistant Professor of Latin American History at Barnard College, Columbia University. He has just completed a book on black soldiers in Colonial Mexico, "His Majesty's Men." I am extremely proud of the fact that Ben once was an intern in my congressional office and I submit the following article into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

[From *El Aguila del Hudson Valley*, Nov. 2000]

BLACKS IN MEXICO

(By Ben Vinson III)

As Hispanic Heritage month and the Dia de la Raza are still present in our memory, it becomes important to reflect upon the full diversity of Latin America. Few other regions in the world are as racially rich, and few have achieved the same level of cultural accomplishment. From music and the arts to politics and science, people of Latin American descent have made significant contributions. Names such as Oscar Arias Sanchez, Jorge Luis Borges, Diego Rivera, Che Guevara, Rigoberta Menchu, and Celia Cruz, are just a few of the famous figures who have had a tremendous impact on our times. But what is often overlooked is the role that Africa has played in the region's heritage and the development of its people. With over 450 million inhabitants, Latin America has one of the world's largest populations. Yet what is not as well known is that up to 1/3 of all Latin Americans today can claim some African ancestry, according to research conducted by the Organization of Africans in the Americas (OAA). In 1992, there were as many as 82 million Afro-Latinos in the hemisphere, with some living in unlikely places such as Argentina, Uruguay, Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia. Even in the United States today there are between 3.5 to 5 million Afro-Latinos residing in the country.

What does this mean? Simply that one cannot celebrate the Hispanic heritage without celebrating the connection with Africa, regardless of one's national origins. Mexico is an excellent example. With so much empha-

sis on the country's Indian history, it has become easy to overlook links with an African past. But these links exist. When Columbus first sailed to the coast of southern Mexico between 1502-1504, he could not have imagined that within a hundred years, this land would become the largest importer of African slaves to the New World. Between 1521 and 1650, Mexico alone imported nearly half of all the black slaves introduced into the Americas. They worked in a variety of professions, including the farming industry, on tobacco and sugar plantations, as domestic workers, and in silver mining trades. Anywhere that the Spaniards lived, they took African slaves with them. Because of this, Mexico's black population was spread out everywhere, from the northern frontier towns near the current U.S.-Mexican border, to the southern villages near Guatemala and along the coast of the Yucatan.

Blacks mixed quickly with the indigenous and mestizo populations. Some of this had to do with the condition of slavery itself. Not many women were brought from Africa, which forced many men to marry non-black women. After 1650, the number of black inter-racial marriages had increased so much that some scholars believe that Mexico's version of mestizaje owes a great debt to Africa. According to Dr. Patrick Carroll, it was essentially blacks that fused the indigenous and white races together, since both Spaniards and Indians frequently had sexual relations with blacks. Sometimes these relations were more frequent than they had with one another.

Blacks were not just slaves in Mexico. African slaves were commonly released from bondage through buying their freedom, using small amounts of money that they were able to save on their jobs. Sometimes masters also freed their slaves because of their good services, or because they feared that they would be punished by God if they kept them. By 1800, Mexico possessed one of the largest numbers of free-blacks in the world, just behind countries like Brazil. In fact, the total number of blacks in Mexico numbered over 370,000, representing nearly 10% of the population.

What happened to Mexico's blacks? We don't see much of them in the media, nor has there been a strong effort to write about them in history textbooks. The percentage of Afro-Mexicans has grown smaller over time. Although there are almost a half a million blacks in the country today, they represent less than 1% of the national population, and they live mainly in the coastal areas of Veracruz, Oaxaca, and Acapulco. The general Mexican population is often aware of a small black presence in their country, especially in Veracruz. But oftentimes these people are viewed as foreigners, mainly Cuban immigrants, who are not truly a part of the nation. While Cuban immigration at the end of the 19th century was significant towards increasing the number of blacks in Mexico, the descendants of Mexican slaves still remain an important part of the Afro-Mexican population.

When one travels to the west coast of Mexico we can see these roots, as I did during a research trip four years ago. In the village of Corralero, Emiliano Colon Torres (age 99) spoke about how he participated in the Mexican Revolution along with other Afro-Mexicans, and even black Cubans. But times were difficult, both before and after the war. As he and several others noted: "Some [darker] blacks, especially one Cuban musician, found it difficult to marry because of their race. A very popular musician who had migrated from Cuba died without ever marrying." Such comments reveal a phenomenon that exists not just in the black areas of Mexico, but in other places in Latin America where

blacks live. Skin color has made it difficult to gain full acceptance in society. This can lead to lower self-esteem, as well as a denial of certain aspects of one's African heritage. Despite the fact that the region surrounding Corralero has a long Afro-Mexican history, stretching back into the 1600s, when I asked people how blacks first entered their area, I almost always received the same answer: "Blacks arrived to our coast in the 1940s when a Russian ship sank off shore. There was a black crew working on the ship, and they came to our area and began to populate it." Another version of the story involves a Japanese plane that crashed near the shore, also with a black crew. While there is some evidence of wreckage, these stories deny an entire history involving slavery and the slave trade. Perhaps this is the intention. By not being associated with Africa and slavery, Afro-Mexicans can elevate themselves. Instead of being associated with Africa's negative stereotypes, such as a lack of education, barbaric behavior, and poverty, Afro-Mexicans become associated with the rich Japanese and the powerful Russians. These are better images. It is also possible that the people of Corralero and its neighboring towns knew little of a deep Afro-Mexican past because they have not had access to information about their African history and heritage.

Hispanic Heritage month and El Dia de la Raza are times when we can remedy situations like these. Hispanics and Latin Americans do not need to apologize for, or hide their African heritage. It is part of a great cultural strength, which contributes to the richness and diversity of the region. In the same manner that we recall the early events that led to the development of the Americas, let's not forget that in each of our countries, Africa had an important role too. And whether through subtle mestizaje or more overt influences, an African heritage continues to shape who the Latin American people truly are.

INTRODUCTION OF THE ARMED SERVICES VOTE RESERVE ACT

HON. MATT SALMON

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 6, 2000

Mr. SALMON. Mr. Speaker, I thought I would be at home with my family at this time, preparing for the holidays, but we are here, and we have work to do. One of the areas that we should address before we adjourn is the disgraceful treatment of our overseas military personnel by partisan political operatives.

At the behest of political operatives, lawyers spread out across Florida with a specific goal in mind—to disenfranchise the men and women of our Armed Forces who are living abroad. So they distributed a 5-page primer on how to kill these votes, and they challenged every absentee ballot they could from our servicemen and servicewomen, managing to block more than 1,400 votes from being counted.

They didn't block these votes from being counted a second, third, or fourth time—they blocked them from being counted even once. These votes now sit in the trash, and barring congressional action this year, those votes will never be counted.

Along with my friend CURT WELDON, I am today introducing the Armed Services Vote Rescue Act, which will count those ballots cast

by our military personnel stationed overseas. And it will not just make sure they are counted in future elections, it will make sure that they are counted in Florida this year. Legal scholars assure us the bill is entirely constitutional.

The bill essentially adopts the standard articulated by Senator ZELL MILLER in the Washington Post of November 20th:

Any ballot from a man or women in the military who is serving this country should be counted—period. I don't care when it's dated, whether it's witnessed or anything else. If it is from someone serving this country and they made the effort to vote, count it and salute them when you do it.

I was in Kosovo earlier this year and let me tell you—obtaining a postmark is not the first thing on our soldiers' minds, nor should it be. Or imagine those on aircraft carriers—they don't wait around to find a postmark—they get the mail off the carrier the first chance they get.

Those who defend our Nation should not be mistreated the way they have been wronged this year in Florida, and no man who would be Commander-in-Chief should seek to exclude the votes of the men and women he would command.

You know, at the same time Florida officials were dismissing valid military ballots, these same Florida counties, according to the Miami Herald, accepted the illegal votes of as many as 5,000 felons, including at least 45 killers and 16 rapists. So rapists' votes were counted, but soldiers' votes were trashed. The Congress cannot let that stand.

We have more than 30 original cosponsors on the bill and endorsements from a growing list of veterans groups. So before we adjourn, let's give each and every Member the opportunity to cast a simply vote, so there can be no mistake: Do we stand without military men and women, or do we stand with partisan lawyers out to obstruct their votes?

Let's pass the Armed Services Vote Rescue Act and do right by our military personnel.

I submitted into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD the following letters from various veterans groups who have endorsed this legislation as well as a copy of the memo that was used to exclude these military ballots.

NON COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Alexandria, VA, December 1, 2000.

Hon. MATT SALMON,

U.S. House of Representatives, Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SALMON: The Non Commissioned Officers Association of the USA (NCOA) is writing to state our strong, unequivocal support for the Armed Services Vote Rescue Act.

The sacred oath of all military personnel, officers and enlisted alike, is to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. Incredibly, military personnel sworn to preserve the Constitution, at great personal risk, were in more than 40% of the cases in Florida denied their most basic right to have their vote counted in the November 2000 general election. The outright rejection of armed services absentee ballots, as appears to be the case, because of some discriminatory pre-conceived notion that military votes might favor one side versus the other, is unacceptable and should not be allowed to stand.

Military members give up many rights while serving in the Armed Forces. Restrictions are placed on their political activities

and Armed Forces members understand and abide by those limits. The right to vote is the only form of political speech that a military member can exercise freely and without restriction. Denying the vote of military personnel and their eligible family members, who have complied with all applicable registration and voting requirements, is unconscionable. The very thought of it should chill the spine of all freedom loving people.

NCOA salutes your effort to reverse this recent travesty and thereby re-enfranchise Florida's military absentee voters. The fact that any individual, group, political party or candidate for national office would systematically seek to marginalize military absentee ballots is appalling. The call to arms has been issued. Fix bayonets. Count on NCOA'S full support for swift consideration and enactment of the Armed Services Vote Rescue Act.

Sincerely,

DAVID W. SOMMERS,
President/CEO.

LARRY D. RHEA,
Director of Legislative Affairs.

THE RETIRED ENLISTED ASSOCIATION,
Alexandria, VA, December 5, 2000.

Hon. MATT SALMON,
Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE SALMON: On behalf of the over 100,000 members of The Retired Enlisted Association and Auxiliary, we applaud you for introducing The Armed Services Vote Rescue Act.

We have received numerous phone calls, letters and emails from thousands of military retirees and survivors concerning the current problems with the counting of absentee ballots from military personnel deployed in distant locations.

We join you in the effort to insure that soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and coastguardsmen have the same opportunity to vote as the American people who are provided the defense of our nation.

Sincerely,

MARK H. OLANOFF,
National Legislative Director.

AIR FORCE SERGEANTS ASSOCIATION,
Temple Hills, MD, December 1, 2000.

Hon. MATT SALMON,
Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE SALMON: On behalf of the 150,000 members of this association, I applaud you for taking the initiative to introduce legislation that would require all overseas absentee ballots from military members to be counted.

Our association has received numerous telephone calls and email messages expressing the outrage of our active duty and retired military members. It is a sad day for America when the votes of our men and women, who on a daily basis make sacrifices and dedicate their lives to ensuring our freedom, are denied the right to vote for their next commander in chief.

The "Armed Services Vote Rescue Act," if enacted would help "re-enfranchise" military voters not only in Florida, but across the country and around the world. Again, thank you for sponsoring this much needed legislation.

Sincerely,

JAMES D. STATON,
Executive Director.